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ART. VIII.—*Description of Ancient Chinese Vases; with Inscriptions illustrative of the History of the Shang Dynasty of Chinese Sovereigns, who reigned from about 1756 to 1112 n.c. Translated from the Original Work, entitled Pō-koo-too, by PETER PERRING THOMS, Esq.*

(Continued from Vol. I. page 222.)

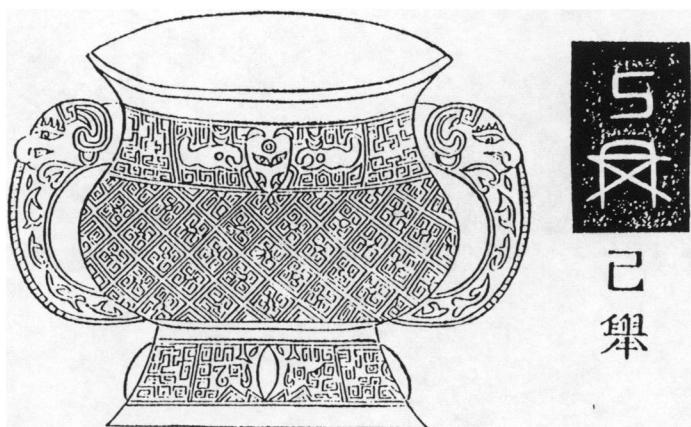
THE E 彝 VESSELS, FOR CONTAINING WATER AND
THE FRAGRANT WINE 斚 斝 YÜH-CHANG.

I.



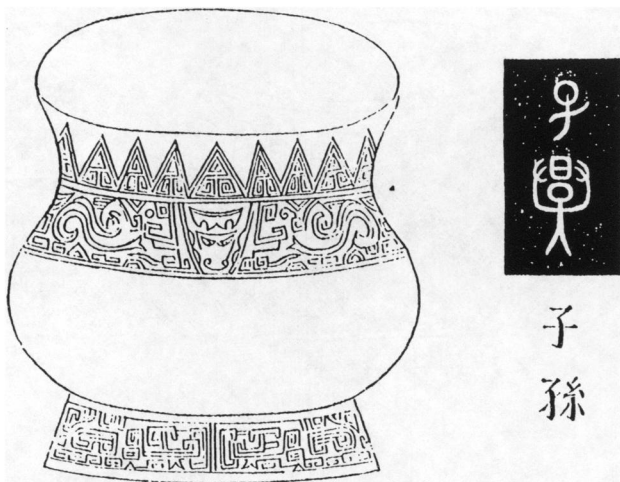
THIS vessel measured, in height, five Chinese inches and seven-tenths; its containing depth, four inches and five-tenths; its circumference, at the top, seven inches and two-tenths. It weighed five Chinese pounds and fourteen ounces. It had two handles, or ears, as the Chinese term them, for ornament. This vessel is considered very plain, but was used for sacred purposes. The handle is said to be formed of the head of an animal known for its greedy appetite: hence its admonitory design. The vessel had no inscription.


II.



This vessel measured, in height, six Chinese inches; its containing depth, four inches and seven-tenths; its circumference, at top, eight inches and two-tenths; and around the centre, eight inches. It weighed seven Chinese pounds and six ounces; and had two handles, and the inscription of 己舉 E-KEU. The figures on the vessel are called 乳 *Joo*, "breast," of which there were a hundred and forty-one. There were several sovereigns of this dynasty who took the name E, but it is considered uncertain to whom the inscription alludes. Anciently, a person of the name of LE-KING, of the state Lin, obtained a valuable vase at Show-Yang with a similar inscription; and a person named WANG-KEAE also obtained an ancient vessel at Lō-yang with the inscription 丁舉 *Ting-keu*, which greatly resembled the above vessel in its form, as well as in the mode of writing the inscription. The character 舉 *Keu*, is formed of *Yu* 與 "with," and 手 *Show*, "the hand," i. e. "to lift with the hand;" hence some have imagined that the inscription indicates the exclusive use of the vessel, to be raised or held up when offering the wine, &c.

III.



This vessel measured, in height, three Chinese inches and five-tenths; its containing depth, two inches and nine-tenths; round the centre, four inches and six-tenths. It contained about an English pint, and weighed two Chinese pounds, having the above inscription, meaning "Sons and grandsons." The second character is considered an unusual form; for the hands appear raised as if to embrace  *Mh*, "the sun." One authority represents the two characters as intimating that the vessel should be transmitted from son to grandson—a correct sentiment: and 'the raising the hands towards the sun,' he says, 'indicates respect due to a prince; for he that is acquainted with the respect due to a prince, cannot be unacquainted with the duties that are required from a minister or son.' The form of the characters is thought sufficient to prove that the vessel belonged to the *Shang* dynasty.

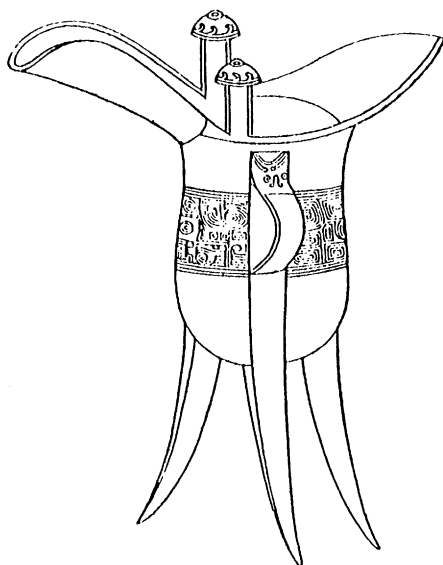
IV.



作寶彝

This vessel measured, in height, four Chinese inches and three-tenths; its containing depth was three inches and five-tenths; its circumference, at the top, six inches and three-tenths; round the centre, six inches and five-tenths. It weighed two Chinese catties, or pounds, and thirteen ounces; and contained the above inscription. The handles of this vessel having the form of a tiger's head, it has been designated the tiger-head vessel. It is supposed by an eminent writer to have been used at one of the rites at which the emperor presided, called *T'e-k'ä*. The same writer remarks that the vessel was not ornamented with the tiger's head to remind us that this animal came from the west, but to admonish us to exercise the five cardinal virtues, 'Benevolence, Justice, Integrity, Sincerity, and Prudence.'

THE TSEŎ VESSEL.



The above is a specimen of thirty-five vessels ascribed to this period, which differ very little in their devices. In the introductory remarks to a description of one of them it is said,—“ Though the vessel is small and may be considered of little worth, yet being a *Tseŏ* vessel, one used exclusively by the nobility, hence used by the officiating officer or emperor to drink out of when sacrificing, it is a vessel of very great importance in the national rites.” Its service was required when worshipping the God of Heaven, and the God of earth, spirits, and genii; also, on ceremonial visits.

A MIRROR, DURING THE TANG DYNASTY.



The above diagram represents the reverse side of a polished steel mirror. The centre represents the sun. The four animals around it represent four constellations. The next circle contains the *Pǎ-kwa*, or Fūn-he's Eight Diagrams, by which he and his followers attempt to account for all the changes and transmutations which take place in nature. The outer circle represents the twelve signs of the Chinese Zodiac.

[*This finishes the Article on Ancient Vases, &c.*]